

Life of the Spirit

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THE KING AND THE KINGDOM

ROLAND POTTER, O.P.

GRACE and peace . . . from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the first-born of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of earth. To him who loves us and has loosed us from our sins in his blood, and made us to be a kingdom, priests to God and his Father—to him be the glory and the might for ever and ever: amen! (Apoc. 1, 4-6.) This text from the last book of the Scriptures serves to recall a large and important aspect of the apostolic witness to the doctrine of the King and his Kingdom. The Apocalypse is full of the Kingdom in all its phases: as it now is, even now triumphant, and yet to be perfected, consummated in a hereafter. It is a sustained vision of Jesus Christ glorified as also of the Bride of Christ, the heavenly Jerusalem, glorified.

To the several visions of St John let us add the witness of Philip who went about 'preaching the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ' (Acts 8, 12). St Paul, too, is an apostolic witness, as when at Ephesus 'for three months he spoke boldly, reasoning and persuading about the Kingdom of God' (Acts 19, 8), or again in the words of the poignant farewell at Miletus, 'you know after what manner I have lived among you . . . and now you shall see my face no longer, all you among whom I went about preaching the kingdom . . .' (Acts, 20, 20, 25), and then again to his last days 'bearing witness to the Kingdom of God, and trying from morning to evening to convince them concerning Jesus from the law of Moses and from the prophets' (Acts 28, 23; cf. 28, 31).

Should you argue that this is really St Luke talking in Acts, still it could be shown that he was faithfully representing St Paul's teaching on this matter. For he whose

whole life and love was the preaching of Christ crucified, preached too of that Kingdom that came to be with the consummation of that loving sacrifice of Calvary. The Epistles tell of a loving God 'who has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son' (Col. 1, 13). The faithful are called from darkness into the light of that kingdom because 'God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has shone in our hearts' (2 Cor. 4, 6), and are bidden 'walk then as children of light' (Ephes. 5, 8) in a kingdom which is at once both a society into which we enter and fidelity to a teaching or doctrine not of this world. (Cf. 1 Cor. 4, 20; 6, 9, 10; 15, 50; Gal. 5, 21; Ephes. 5, 5, etc.)

Further witness comes from the Epistle to the Hebrews which teaches that believers receive from the hand of God 'a kingdom which cannot be shaken' (Heb. 12, 28). St James speaks of the 'heirs of the kingdom, promised by God to those who love him' (James 2, 5); and we read too of 'the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ' (2 Peter 1, 11).

All these texts taken together, forming what we have termed the apostolic witness, bear out the teaching of the King himself, show that his doctrine lived on in the Church then as it ever lives on with undying life. It was what he taught from the outset, when he began to do and to teach and at his baptism took over the message of that kingdom seemingly in the very words of St John Baptist. It was what he taught at the term of his course on earth 'when he showed himself alive after his passion by many proofs, during forty days appearing to them and speaking of the Kingdom of God' (Acts 1, 33).

It was new teaching for the contemporaries of our Lord, yet at the same time familiar and reminiscent of a whole tradition of synagogal teaching, conjuring up a great element in the messianic hopes of Israel. Verbally the notion conveyed was rather more abstract. More often we should render the biblical phrases by 'dominion' or 'kingly rule' rather than 'kingdom'. The rabbinic writings give both 'kingdom of God' and 'kingdom of the heavens'. From there it is an easy step to the language of the New Testament,

where we read *basileia tou Theou* (sixty-three times) and *basileia tôn ouranôn* (thirty-two times, in St Matthew only). The two phrases are identical in meaning. It is perhaps impossible to decide whether our Lord himself spoke of the 'Kingdom of God' or of the 'Kingdom of the heavens'. It may be that St Matthew's formula preserves the original phrase. But he wrote for judaeo-Christians who would anyway have tended to avoid the revered name of Jahweh; and it may be that our Lord used both expressions.

Let us leave words and phrases, and sketch out very briefly the long pre-history of the notion of King and Kingdom. Kingship more often supposes some sort of territorial domain: yet not so necessarily when talking of God. The lordship or domain of God in the Old Testament has three main aspects: (i) dominion over Israel; (ii) over the world, heaven and earth in a very wide sense; and (iii) dominion over the elect. The idea of calling God a 'king' in Israel was born of historical experience. From the earliest times the Chosen People were conscious of fighting under God's orders, of wending their way under God's leadership and shepherding: theocracy was rooted in that nation.

'... thou shalt bring them [the Chosen People] in, and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance, in thy most firm habitation, which thou hast made, O Lord; thy sanctuary, O Lord, which thy hands have established. The Lord shall reign for ever and ever.' (Exod. 15, 17-18.) Such a passage brings out well the close union between Israel and God, and that kingship which is everlasting. To it we might add the second half of Isaiah, 'I am the Lord, your Holy One, the Creator of Israel, your King' (Is. 43, 15). And because God is Redeemer as well as King, the Kingdom is depicted as future: 'How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings . . . that preacheth salvation, that sayeth to Sion, thy God shall reign' (Is. 52, 7). Such words heralding the Gospel, as all this part of Isaiah, have earned for the book the title of 'fifth gospel', telling of our Lord and his Kingdom.

'The Lord has reigned, let the earth rejoice, let many islands be glad' (Ps. 96, 1), might serve to sum up the spirit of the Psalms, more especially the 'royal' psalms and

the messianic (the themes are frequently interwoven) which tell of the reign of God and foretell the reign of his Christ. The Psalms can be classified according as they sing of a past or present or future reign of God. More often, they tell of a future; David awaits Christ.

Something of a new conception appears in the vision of Isaiah: 'I saw the Lord sitting upon his throne, high and elevated. . . . Holy Holy, Holy, . . . all the earth is full of his glory' (Is. 6, 1). There is a note of universality. When we come to Daniel, this is doubly apparent, and the mental horizon of the Jews is enlarged beyond all measure. What a change had come upon them, when one of their number could write: 'I Nabuchodonosor do now praise and glorify and magnify the King of heaven because all his works are true' (Dan. 4, 34), and 'verily your God is the God of gods and Lord of kings' (Dan. 11, 47). God's transcendent rule is recognised by a Babylonian. The later Psalms contain parallel notions, as do the books of Esther, Tobias, Maccabees. 'Thou art great, O Lord, for ever, and thy kingdom is to all ages' (Tobias 13, 1).

The third main aspect of the kingdom in the Old Testament is of God as King of all the elect, of those just ones who, after death, will live and reign with God. An eschatological idea, familiar to traditional Christian, but in no Hebrew book of the Old Testament. Only in Wisdom is it explicit: 'the just shall be mine and shall run to and fro like sparks among the reeds; they shall judge over nations, rule over peoples, and their Lord shall reign for ever' . . . 'they shall receive a kingdom of glory and a crown of beauty', for 'incorruption bringeth near to God' (Wisdom 3, 7-8; 5, 16-17; 6, 20).

With all this, and more, in the minds of those who heard him, we can understand better why our Lord made so much use of the phrase 'kingdom of God' or 'Kingdom of heaven'. It was generally understood in some sense; it was admirably adaptable, a 'portmanteau' phrase rich in suggestion, and at the same time sufficiently indeterminate. It could be, and was, given new and forceful connotations. Note that our Lord never defined '*Malcuth shamayim*'. The disciples were to make their own definition, gradually, as

they grew aware of the wondrous unfolding of God's designs. And we are to do likewise.

Now let us see various aspects of the Kingdom—as we can glean them from the very words of the King himself.

First, in terms of time, the Kingdom as a very present reality that has come and *is*. Thus 'Repent, for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand' (Matt. 4, 17). John the Baptist is the last of a long tradition of Law and Prophets. The old order gives way to a new: after him is the reign of the Kingdom (cf. Luke 16, 16). The Kingdom is inaugurated because devils are expelled, 'if I, by the Spirit of God, cast out devils, then is the Kingdom of God come upon you' (Matt. 12, 28). So, too, the Kingdom is a *present* possession of some who have advanced far in the grace of God, 'Blessed are the poor in spirit . . . the persecuted, because theirs is the Kingdom' (Matt. 5, 3; 10). Yet it is already a present possession of all who have been baptised. Baptism indeed brings about an entry into that Kingdom, 'unless a man be born of water and spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God' (John 3, 5). And there yet remains a sense in which it is received now by spiritual childhood, for we are to 'receive the Kingdom of God like a little child' (Mark 10, 15).

Next we consider the Kingdom in process of coming-to-be. This is perhaps best known to us because we pray 'thy kingdom come', and because we know full well that there must be more prayer, toil, suffering on our part before the kingdom is in any sense established in the world as in our own hearts. This coming, and yet-to-come aspect of the kingdom, is the prolongation of a theme that can be traced through the prophets of the Old Testament. And now with our Lord as Priest, Prophet and King, there is truly a new beginning, a further definitive stage in the unfolding of God's plans. The kingdom in its truest sense begins with our Lord. He alone is truly King: *Tu Solus Dominus*, and his life-work is the promotion of that kingdom. And for that promotion there must be ceaseless preaching of the word of God, or the 'Word of the Kingdom' (Matt. 13, 19), for the 'Gospel of the Kingdom must be preached throughout the world' (Matt. 24, 14). In this sense the Kingdom of God is a doctrine, new and mysterious, a teaching sown in the

hearts of men (Matt. 13, 37). The Christian teacher is taught about this (Matt. 13, 32) while the preacher spreads the good news or gospel. The fullest expression of that teaching is in the Sermon on the Mount, which has been rightly termed the charter of the Kingdom. It is a great body of teachings, perhaps from several moments in our Lord's life. It is not complete (thus, there is nothing about faith . . .) but illustrative of the doctrinal aspect, presented with authority by our Lord: thus we find 'of old' . . . 'but I say unto you . . .'

From the kingdom as a doctrine we pass naturally to the sense of the kingdom as a society or the body of those who accept this teaching, and who recognise the King's authority behind that teaching. This assembly of believers is a sort of prolongation of Israel. The 'Hear, O Israel' is renewed for the New Israel of God. Jews should have been its natural members, yet they will be excluded: 'the Kingdom of God shall be taken from you and shall be given to a nation that yields the fruit thereof' (Matt. 21, 43). The disciples 'await the kingdom' in his company, following his doctrine (Luke 23, 51; Matt. 15, 43). Pharisees are condemned for closing it to others, not entering themselves (Matt. 23, 13), and yet all are convened to enter (Luke 14, 16-24). Heroic effort, violence may be called for (Matt. 11, 2); and the call is constantly repeated, even to the eleventh hour (Matt. 20, 1-16). In this society, we are bidden seek first the kingdom of God (Luke 12, 31), which is a precious pearl, a treasure (Matt. 13, 44-46), and calls from us supreme sacrifices (Luke 18, 29).

God's help is assured in furthering the kingdom. Indeed he gives all. 'Fear not, little flock, for it has pleased the heavenly Father to give you the Kingdom' (Luke 12, 32). Faith and understanding are gifts of God: 'to you it is given to know' (Matt. 13, 11). So much is given—because the King himself has taught that 'it is more blessed to give than to receive' (Acts 20, 35). Yet all God's giving supposes the co-operation of man in furthering the Kingdom. Not the man who says 'yes', but he who acts (Matt. 21, 28-32). And there is no bargaining with God (Matt 20, 10); 'even so when you have done all things commanded you, say

we are useless servants; we have not done what we were bound to do' (Luke 17, 10). And, anyway, the Kingdom will grow as it were necessarily as seed sown in the ground. But the kingdom is in part human, there are some members to be eliminated 'at the last day' (Matt. 13, 24-50).

This 'last day' brings us to another facet of the kingdom: the kingdom as fully realised in the final consummation, in the Messianic kingdom. 'I shall not drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God' (Mark 14, 25); and 'Blessed is he that shall feast in the kingdom of God' (Luke 14, 15). This 'last day' is also that of eternal retributions, of heaven or gehenna (Mark 9, 47; Luke 13, 25-30). It is especially at the end of St Matthew's gospel that we are given a synthesis of our Lord's saying about 'the last things', the kingdom in its consummation. Thus we are told of the end of the world and the triumph of Jesus Christ (24, 1-44); of the end of individual disciples and their relation to the work of the Redeemer (24, 15-25, 30); and finally, the end of the world, when God will be all in all (25, 31-46). 'But when the Son of Man comes in glory and all the angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory, and all nations shall be gathered together before him. . . . Then shall the King say to those on his right, come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundations of the world. . . .'

Only here, in the Synoptic gospels, does our Lord assume the title of 'King'. But, when before Pilate, he declared 'Thou sayest it; I am King' (John 18, 37). And we know and believe that he is King of kings and Lord of lords, and of his kingdom there shall be no end.

THE POOR IN SPIRIT

A SERMON BY MEISTER ECKHART

[A number of sermons and devotional tracts by the great Dominican mystic Meister Eckhart (1260 to about 1327) have come down to us. They were usually taken down while he was preaching—in convents, or at the Dominican church at Cologne or Erfurt—and later reconstructed from verbatim notes. What has come down to us is therefore often rather disjointed, and very fine passages are found side by side with comments which may appear banal. But even so, we cannot read anything that bears Eckhart's name without appreciating his tremendous significance for the development of speculative mysticism in the late Middle Ages. 'The Poor in Spirit' is translated from the Middle High German from the text edited by F. Pfeiffer, *Deutsche Mystiker des vierzehnten Jahrhunderts*, Vol. 2, p. 493f. Leipzig 1857; and 'A Certain Man Made a Great Supper' (cf. July, 1952, *LIFE OF THE SPIRIT*) was translated from 'Meister Eckhart. Die deutschen und lateinischen Werke', edited by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, the German Works, Vol. 1, p. 342f. Stuttgart 1936, in progress.—ELIZABETH STOPP.]

Beati pauperes spiritu. . . Matthew, 5, 3.

LET us for evermore be as poor as we were from the beginning when we had no being. Dwelling within God as our true being, we become truly ourselves. We need not fear to make use of all things, but only in and through their creator. We should worship God without the help of comparisons, and love him without material images and enjoy him without a sense of ownership. We should conceive all things in purity, as the eternal wisdom has engendered and ordered them in itself.

The poor in spirit go out of themselves and out of all creatures; they are nothing, they have nothing, they do nothing, and are nothing except with God and by his grace. They have no particular knowledge of God. St Augustine says: all things are God. St Dionysius says: all things are not God. St Augustine says: God is all in all. But Dionysius: God is not anything that we can say or think, and yet God is the acknowledged sanctity of all the saints and is himself the essence of their holiness. Dionysius sees God more clearly in this nothingness and says: God is nothing. In him is all nothingness. All that is, hangs upon this

nothingness, and this same nothingness is an entity which is so incomprehensible that all the spirits in heaven and on earth can neither understand nor fathom it. So he remains unknown of all creatures.

When the soul reaches the purity of not being attached to anything it is also free of guilt. That comes of the freedom in which it now moves. When it becomes aware of itself and of the body it has a sense of guilt as it did before, and it feels shackled; but entering again into its inner sanctuary, it calls to mind what it had once found, and rising then above itself, it comes where it may enjoy all bliss and plenty. St Bernard says: the soul knows well that it cannot find its beloved until it has cast out all else. St Augustine says: the man who loves, knowing well that he is not loved in return, loves surely and well, and this is the greatest love. St Paul says: we know that all things work together for good to them that love God. And Christ said: blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

One might say that spiritual poverty is of various kinds. In fact there are four kinds. To begin with, the soul being illuminated by the spirit of truth and weighing all things in the balance, holds as nothing all that is not God. As St Paul says: I count all things as loss. In this state the soul wearies of all creatures.

In the second state of poverty the soul sees the example of Christ in its greatness and its own self in its meanness, counting all its efforts as nothing even though it had the sum of all human achievement to its credit. Now it mourns in the words of the Book of Love and says: my love himself has shown me the way and I cannot follow where he goes. The soul follows of its own accord, and yet its quarry, Christ, is in turn hard upon the soul's track. Such sweet savour draws the soul out of itself, forgetting all its pain. And here St Augustine says that the soul is more at home where it loves than where it lives. And St Peter says that our dwelling place is in heaven.

In the third state of poverty the spirit has died to its own nature, and then all pride of life is slain and the only thing that still lives in the soul is the spirit of God. Of this St Paul says: and dying, behold I live; now not I, but Christ

liveth in me. In this spiritual state the soul has learnt poverty, for all that it has to give and to hold is taken away. It is poor of its own free will, and Christ can do with the soul what he pleases.

In the fourth state of poverty the soul realises that God is wholly incomprehensible, beyond the reach of all a man may either think or do. The more deeply the soul is lost in God the more brightly the mysterious radiance of the Godhead stands out in contrast to the soul's poverty. In like measure as the inward man progresses toward knowledge of the Godhead, so the outer man will follow the example of Jesus Christ in willing poverty. That means that God's grace has despoiled it of all selfhood so that now it uses creatures as it needs them, but passively and without attachment. And when the soul is deprived of creatures, it can do without them in the same detached mind as if they were there. And all the soul can now do is to rejoice in God's incomprehensible truth, to rejoice that all created things are as nothing compared with him, and that the fire of his love has drawn the soul's nothingness upwards into itself so that it cleaves there like a tiny sparking flame. St Paul was in this state of poverty when he said: I understood secret words in God which it is not granted to man to utter. He was so closely caught up into the Godhead that neither life nor death could ever part him from his love. This is what happens to a generous soul which is lost in God, lost not only to all creatures, but lost also to itself, finding nothing there but only the essential undimmed radiance of the Godhead. Behold, the soul is so merged in the being of him who is called her heavenly joy that it is incapable of real wrongdoing. All the saints have declared that nothing can move them from their anchorage in God. Now real wrongdoing is all that is not ordered according to divine love, that is, all that diverges from the life of Christ. For he is the pattern and the essence of all things. And what is true virtue? Anything that heavenly love alone effects in the soul, for it can but create in its own image.

Now I have told you about the poor in spirit. And into this true poverty may we be drawn by the overflowing goodness of God. AMEN.

DISTRACTIONS

DOMINIC J. SIRE, O.P.

THE unequivocal command to continual prayer so clearly expressed by Christ in the Gospels is by no means so clearly understood by the average christian of today. That everybody should pray the sincere christian will readily admit, but it is the element of eternity that is either glossed over or assumed to refer only to those who have received a special call to a life of contemplation in the cloister. The fact plainly is that it is a call to all who pretend to follow Christ, and we are bound to pray always. There is no doubt an unconscious prejudice based on a misconception of the meaning of prayer. The reasons for this prejudice may be said to be two which are very closely allied, one being in a sense the cause of the other.

We are very prone to conceive of life in two departments which wrongly we assume to be dissociated from one another: the natural and the supernatural. These two we consider so distinct as to be almost in opposition. Herein lies the difficulty which makes us consider a large section of life in the light of a distraction. Distractions are in this sense inevitable, and therefore to pray always becomes a practical impossibility. We do not like to think that we are being disobedient to God's command, and consequently we pretend that the command is not for us, or even that the command was not really given. The solution to the whole problem may be found if we examine the attitude of theology to morality. St Thomas never denied that there were such things as moral virtues, but from the christian point of view they are not really virtues unless they are vivified by charity. For St Thomas virtue is only really virtue when it is ordered to the ultimate, that is to God. Justice for justice sake is good in the natural order, but for St Thomas it should be justice for God's sake if it is really to be true virtue. St Thomas takes Aristotle's definition of virtue as 'the disposition of a perfect thing to the best' to its real and ultimate conclusion. For the christian clearly the 'best' is God, and

therefore in the christian context virtue to be real virtue must be directly related to God. This does not eliminate the moral virtues but raises them to the supernatural; it supernaturalises what would otherwise remain simply natural; it makes ultimate what would otherwise be limited in its end.

We can now apply this to life, to our natural life, and say that for the true christian there should not in practice be any purely natural life because all can be ordered to God. Indeed the natural life, including its particular condition, in which God has placed us is God's will for us, and is given to us that through it and by it we may work out our eternal happiness. With this in mind, what remains that can be called a distraction, since all should lead to God? Prayer we are told is the raising up of the mind and heart to God, and anything which leads to God raises the mind and heart to God unless through our own stupidity we allow these things to lead us away from God.

What the majority of us call distractions in prayer are the daily preoccupations of life which we have wrongly put in the category of natural things, failing to see that they are the very things God has made part of our lives. Furthermore, we think that God is not interested in our natural occupations, our worries and our trials. We have perhaps lost that simple confidence in God which sent St Thomas to the tabernacle when problems beset him. We try to keep as deep and dark secrets from God the very things which God has put into our lives. Can anybody sincerely think that God is not interested, and very intensely interested, in the daily preoccupations of the mother of a large family? Yet should these very things cross her mind when she is praying, she will surely confess them as distractions whereas she might so very well have made them the very marrow of her prayer. God made her a mother, he gave her children. Mary, the most perfect of all human beings, 'full of grace' and immaculate, free from the slightest suspicion of sin or imperfection, was very much preoccupied in mind when she lost her Son in Jerusalem, and her very seeking after him was her prayer. She of all creatures must have fulfilled the precept to pray always, in the most perfect manner. What

Mary did, many other mothers can and should do without the least misgiving that they are being distracted. Mary's day-to-day life in many respects is the life of many women today, and if she always prayed by the very fulfilment of her domestic duties, so may any woman today.

Prayer, somebody once said, is not what you say, nor even what you do, but what you are. It is a state of being. We must clear our minds of the obsession that to pray is to pour out a flood of words. Words have their place in the social life of the Church, in its glorious liturgy; this is a necessary consequence of our being social animals, but prayer is a far wider thing than this, especially in the light of the commandment to pray always. The very inactivity of our sleep is a prayer provided it is for God. We sleep that we may be the better able to accomplish our daily duties and thereby fulfil the vocation God has given us. The great writers on the spiritual life tell us that many souls have been retarded in their progress by a too-abundant use of words in their prayers. The mind can think of God and the greater mysteries better without words which of their very nature are material and therefore limited. The infinite can never be expressed perfectly by words, whereas we are reminded by the master philosopher that the mind has itself a certain infinity since its very object is being. And God is being, unlimited being, perfect being.

Why should we be afraid of trying to answer the call to perpetual prayer? Only because we misunderstand what prayer really is, because we see life in terms of a multitude of disconnected events the majority of which we think cannot be related to God. The truth is that there is nothing which cannot be directed to God except that which is sinful in itself. Sin denies God because God is being and sin is a denial of being. All being leads to the BEING, and all denial of being recedes from God in the measure in which it denies being. St Francis was brought near to God by nature as he saw it, by the animals and the flowers. These things were in no sense distractions for him, they were the very means by which he was brought to a contemplation of the goodness and truth of their creator. If we see in others a distraction it is only because we fail to realise that St Paul

was not indulging in extravagant language when he reminded us that we were 'temples of the Holy Ghost'. To see God in all things is to denude things of their material and limited nature and clothe them in the infinity of God. 'The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars but in ourselves that we are underlings.'



A VIRGIN PREFACE

JEROME HAY, C.S.S.R.

In treating of the origin of the religious state for women in his Apostolic Constitution, *Sponsa Christi*,¹ the Holy Father refers to the ancient consecration of virgins as '... that solemn rite which is advisedly reckoned among the more lovely of the records of ancient liturgy'. Doubtless this is a reference to the prayers for the *Velatio Virginum* in the Sacramentaries. At least one of these prayers is found in the present rite for the blessing and consecration of virgins in the *Pontificale Romanum*. It is in the form of a preface expressing in singular beauty of language the Church's mind on the sublimity of the state of virginity. As it appears in the Pontifical its wording agrees substantially with that of the so-called Leonine Sacramentary which takes us back to the fourth century. The following translation has been attempted in the hope that it may induce others to study the rite as a whole in the Pontifical. This will reveal an ingenious interweaving of the act of oblation with Christ's sacrifice in the Mass and a wealth of spiritual teaching.

PRAYER OF CONSECRATION

IT is truly meet and just, right and availing unto salvation that we should at all time and in all places, give thanks unto thee, Holy Lord, Father Almighty, everlasting God, gracious dweller in chaste bodies and divine lover of undefiled souls.

For in that Word of thine by whom all things were made, thou dost renew man's nature corrupted in the first of our race by the malice of the devil. And this in such wise as not only to recall it to the innocence of its first beginnings, but even to bring it to a knowledge of those everlasting good

¹ Cf. LIFE OF THE SPIRIT, December, 1951, and January, 1952.

things attainable in the life to come. Indeed, thou dost even now uplift unto the likeness of angels those who are still bound by the condition of this mortal life

Look, O Lord, upon these thy handmaids who commit to thy hand their purpose of chastity and make an oblation of themselves unto thee, who didst inspire this desire. For how could the spirit clad as it is in mortal flesh overcome nature's urge, freedom without restraints, force of habit, the incitements of youth, unless thou, O God, hadst freely of thy mercy inflamed them with the love of virginity? Who but thee could nourish this desire in their hearts and furnish them with needful strength?

For in the pouring forth of thy grace upon all nations, thou hast made from every people under heaven adopted heirs of the New Testament countless in number as the stars. These thy children, not by blood nor according to the flesh, but begotten of the Holy Spirit, thou hast enriched with virtues. Indeed, even this gift has sprung from the fount of thy liberality; that while no prohibition forbids the dignity of matrimony and the nuptial blessing remains ever on holy wedlock; even so, there should arise some more exalted souls who while they eschew the marriage bond of man and woman, desire its inner mystery. These, without imitating the way of life of married people, should nevertheless love what marriage betokens.

Holy virginity has acknowledged its author, and vying with angelic purity, has consecrated itself to the nuptials of him who is the bridegroom of perpetual virginity, even as he himself is the ever-virgin's son.

Grant then, O Lord, to these women who implore thy help and desire to be strengthened by the hallowing of thy benediction, the defence of thy protection and governance. Let not that old enemy who besets more excellent undertakings with still more subtle snares creep in through some carelessness of mind to darken the lustre of perfect chastity. Let him not steal away from their resolve of virginity that which becomes also the conduct of married women.

May there be in them, O Lord, by the gift of thy Spirit, a prudent modesty, a wise generosity, a gentleness full of

gravity, a liberty ever chaste. May they be fervent in charity, loving nothing out of thee. May they live praise-worthily, not seeking to be praised. May they glorify thee in holiness of body and purity of soul. In love may they fear thee, in love may they serve thee.

Be thou their honour, thou their joy, thou their desire; in sorrow their comfort, in doubt their counsel, in attack their defence; in trial their patience, in poverty their riches; in fasting their food, in sickness their medicine.

May they possess all things in thee whom they seek to love above all things. Through thee may they keep that which they have professed. Not serving to the eye, but inwardly seeking to please thee who art the searcher of hearts, may they pass into the company of the wise virgins. Thus may they stand in readiness for their heavenly bridegroom, with lamps of virtue lighted and well-provided with oil.

And undisturbed by the unforeseen coming of the King, tranquil, lamps in hand, united with the choir of virgins leading the way, may they run joyfully to meet him. May they not be shut out with the foolish virgins, but with the wise enter the royal gate as of right.

There may they remain in perpetual chastity, ever acceptable in the everlasting companionship of thy Lamb. There, through thy bounty, may they be deemed worthy of adornment with the hundredfold fruit, the reward of their virginity. Through Jesus Christ thy Son, our Lord, who with thee liveth and reigneth in the unity of the Holy Ghost, God for ever and ever. Amen.

RELIGIOUS OBEDIENCE

II. THE VOW, DEVOTION, PIETY AND JUSTICE

OSWIN MAGRATH, O.P.

RELIGIOUS obedience differs from ordinary obedience by being vowed. The vow is an act of worship of God, and dedicates the controlling faculty in man to him, and so the whole of the future life is under the vow. The power to choose is subjected and consecrated to God and his ministers, so that everything done thereafter in execution of the vow has the value and merit of the virtue of religion as well as of obedience.

As in the case of the virtue, there is a difference between the subjective and the objective extension of the vow. It is generally agreed among theologians, and is usually expressed in the constitutions of religious institutes, that there is only objective obligation under the vow when a proper precept binding under sin is given, and commonly only when the vow is expressly invoked in the precept, in a more or less fixed formula. Otherwise there is no sin of sacrilege against the vow, whatever other sin there may be. So that sins against the vow coincide with those against a formal precept.

But while there is no objective intervention of the vow in observing the rule and ordinary orders of superiors, there is normally a subjective intervention. The original intention of the will persists, virtually or explicitly, and all the acts of carrying out of the rule and of orders are intended as a carrying out of the obligation of the original religious profession. All are acts of worship of God. Even if the rule or order is carried out for some other motive than submission to authority, so that it is only material obedience, and the virtue does not come into play, the vow can still function, for it can still be a carrying out of the oblation to God. The vow is not to perform things for any special motive or from obedience, but only to perform them, and that is done. So that the vow extends more widely than the virtue, and the whole of religious life is religious, that is, is

an oblation of the will to God by carrying out of what is prescribed by his ministers.

DEVOTION

The act of the virtue of religion which immediately comes into play in religious obedience is devotion, the will to do promptly what concerns the service of God. For the religious practically everything in life can be approached from this angle. The will to serve God by doing his will, leads directly to the will to do what he wills through rule and superiors. Charity or love of God leads to devotion to his will and service, and devotion and service leads to more love.

It is the consideration of the divine goodness which leads to devotion, and the consideration of the divine goodness in the commands of superiors that gives the devotion of obedience. In this connection it must be remembered that the divine goodness is infinite and only analogous to our goodness. It is able to attain its ends and a higher goodness by means and ways which to us seem and are less good, or even by permitting evil. And it is in the sphere of obedience, that of the wills of men, where freedom reigns and where sin ravages, that this almighty goodness, which attains good by permitting mistakes and sins, will be most evident. The mistakes of superiors, whether apparent or real, do not interfere with the object of obedience, though they may provoke passions and judgments which render it difficult. For the superior is not obeyed for his wisdom, personal judgment or goodness, but for his authority alone. This authority infallibly manifests the will of God in a particular case, however much the superior may err or even sin, so long as he does not command a manifest sin. This is the lesser good which God wants here and now: somehow it must be ordained to a greater good than the immediately wise things would secure. The judgment that the superior is prudent does not form part of the motive of obedience, but only the judgment that he has authority. But a judgment that he is imprudent should not be lightly allowed, and credit must be given for special knowledge and wisdom, and special guidance, otherwise obedience can be made difficult and endangered.

But there can arise a case where the fact of a mistake is quite evident. Prudent means should be used to enlighten the superior. But if these fail, the command can still be obeyed with devotion and the subject do his best to enter into the mind of the superior so as to carry out the command as the thing willed by God. Yet evil is not to be called good in the name of obedience, nor is error and sin, because permitted by God, not to be acknowledged as such. With obedient devotion must go calm sadness at the hurt done to truth and goodness and perhaps to others. Yet it is easy in such a case to create a false trial of obedience. Prejudiced judgment, rash opinions, private passions, irritation, can lead to an extension of the precept or prohibition, in the mind of the subject, in such a way that zeal and activity seem to be suppressed. This is not honest. All precepts are limited and can be obeyed honestly and fully, and yet zeal, charity and activity can continue to function within the limit set. To cease to act in a mood of hurt anger can be an offence against duty to God and to others, as well as against truth and goodness. To combine the obligations of charity and obedience may often be very difficult, and a searching test of intellectual and moral honesty and integrity. This is especially true if an attempt is being made not merely to obey the explicit precept, but to carry out the will of the superior however perceived. In the interests of charity and often of duty to others it is necessary to distinguish as clearly as possible between what the superior really wills as superior, and what is more of the nature of (possibly erroneous) wish, counsel or opinion. While obedience obeys the true will, charity will often have to make full use of the attitude allowed by non-obligatory forms of thinking and willing.

THE GIFT OF PIETY

Obedience is also under the influence of the gift of piety. The virtue looks directly to the will of a superior. Above this, the virtue of natural religion looks to God as Creator and Lord, to be obeyed in his ministers, and supernatural religion looks to a Father who gives sonship and grace, and is to be obeyed as a benefactor. The gift of piety rises above all benefits, whether of creation or of grace, and seeks the

honour of God our Father in himself. It gazes on the divine greatness, glory and honour, and worships him solely for himself, quite apart from his gifts. The will adheres to God's will without any consideration of good or evil received from him, of honour or shame. Because he is holy and good in himself, his will is to be done whatever it may be. Such a point of view transcends obedience and is only possible under the special motion of the Holy Spirit enabling man to rise above human motives and act divinely. The gift of piety thus performs acts which are not obedience, but something far greater, and which contain all the good of obedience in their fullness.

The gift also causes acts of formal obedience to be performed, in order to show the honour due to God and to his children. In relation to all acts concerning the love of our neighbour piety impels to their performance as something due to God's adopted children. All the acts appointed by obedience become a service of God's family, without consideration of the human persons involved. But in the act of the gift of piety the object of obedience, a command, is swallowed up and perfected in an absolute adhesion to God's fatherly glory and honour, to be manifested in devotion to him or to his children. It is the glorious will of God: obligation, justice, personal good and evil are transcended in a loving adhesion.

SOCIAL JUSTICE

Connected with obedience is the virtue of social justice. Since the reason for obedience is that the superior represents God and the community as their minister, it follows that in all his laws and commands he seeks the common good. This is the common good of both the whole community and of the individuals, a sharing in a common good life, when the individuals share their goods, and share in the goods of all. Social justice is the virtue which aims at this common good of all. It is primarily in the superior, who must take the point of view which sees all that the individuals do as contributions to the good of all. While the superior must have the common good in view and therefore exercise social justice in all his commands, it is also required in the subjects in order to obey properly. For since the superior's will

is aimed at the common good, if the subjects are to obey his will as intended they must also have some perception of the common good and aim at it. Everything can be envisaged from this angle: poverty is the use of common goods for the common welfare, work is to be done as a member of the community, not in a too personal manner. If all is done in this spirit, so that the community can take it over, it will be lasting.

There is a social injustice: contempt for the common good. This leads to any and every sin, and all sins can be social injustice in so far as they militate against the common good. Where rules and commands do not bind under sin, this sin against social justice is also objectively excluded. But subjective sin can be very frequent and even grave. The good of the community can be contemned and neglected, the work of the community can be damaged and great harm done to others, the obligations of the community in justice or charity to those outside can be seriously sinned against. So that though the actual omission of what is ordered for the common good may not involve sin in itself, it will very frequently do so because of the motives causing it or the consequences involved, which imply sins against justice, charity or some other virtue.

Religious obedience, therefore, is planned in such a way that, as far as possible, the greatest opportunities are given for a wholehearted devotion to God's will and for progress in perfection, while the opportunities for special sins against either vow or virtue are reduced to a minimum. It is a means of perfection, constantly searching out the personal sins and weaknesses of the religious and inviting him to overcome them. It is the very application of the will to the business of becoming perfect by the practice of love of God and our neighbour.

THE LAY APOSTOLATE

POPE PIUS XII

Words addressed to the World Congress of Lay Apostles. at Rome, 14th October, 1951.

Translated from the *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, 15th November, 1951, by Murdoch Scott, O.P.

VENERABLE Fathers, dearest sons and daughters, it is a source of great consolation and joy to Us to see before Us this impressive gathering of representatives from every continent and from every part of the world, met together here at the very centre of Christianity to celebrate this world Congress on the Lay Apostolate. You have been studying the nature and purpose of this work, you have given much thought to the present state of the world and you are acutely aware of the grave responsibilities which are upon us of this generation to look to the future. These have been for you days of ceaseless prayer, a time for a searching examination of conscience and, withal, an opportunity to exchange views and experiences. And now at the close of the Congress you have come to renew your confession of faith, to declare once more your devotedness and fidelity to the Vicar of Christ, and to ask his blessing on your work and resolutions.

During Our Pontificate We have often spoken about the Lay Apostolate, from different points of view according to the circumstances of the occasion: We have spoken of it before Catholic Action groups and at Marian Conferences; We have spoken of it to working men and women, to teachers, doctors and lawyers, and to special audiences of women; and We have never failed to emphasise the real duties of each in public life as well as in private. These were so many opportunities for Us to mention, sometimes only in passing but at other times quite explicitly, the problems which have been receiving your special attention during this past week.

But on an occasion such as this, when We are speaking to a select company of priests and laymen, each one of whom is fully conscious of his responsibility in this matter of the apostolate. We should like, very briefly, in the light of the past history of the Church, to outline the place of the apostolate and say something about its role in the world today. At no time in the history of the Church has the apostolate been absent; and it should be both interesting and instructive to follow its growth down through the years.

An opinion which finds favour in some quarters is that during the last four hundred years the Church has been exclusively 'clerical', by way of reaction to the upheavals of the sixteenth

century which claimed to abolish the hierarchy once and for all; and so it is suggested that the time is now ripe for the Church to enlarge her forces.

Now this view is the very antithesis of the truth, for it is precisely since the time of the Council of Trent that the lay element in the apostolate has come to the fore and made steady progress. There is no lack of proof that this is so, but it will be sufficient to recall two facts from among the many incidents of history: one is the work of the Marian Congregations of laymen in the furtherance of the apostolate in every domain of public life; the other is the increasing part played by women in this same apostolate in recent times. In this connection two outstanding figures in Catholic history spring to mind: Mary Ward, that wonderful woman whom Catholic England gave as succour to the Church in her dark and terrible hours of anguish; and St Vincent de Paul, beyond all doubt the foremost among those who have given themselves to organising and fostering works of Catholic charity.

But We must not neglect to mention and to praise the real power for good which existed in Catholic countries up to the time of the French Revolution: We are referring to the close union between the Church and the State, the two authorities divinely appointed to govern us. The helpful and ready co-operation in those affairs of public life in which each party had an interest generally made for such a spirit of christian goodwill as to render unnecessary, for the most part, the difficult and tactful vigilance which priests and laymen must exercise today if they are to safeguard the faith and ensure its practice.

At the end of the eighteenth century fresh forces entered into play. History saw the emergence of the United States of America—a country which has developed in an amazing way and where, soon, the Church should expand and grow in vigour of life; but that same period saw the outburst of the French Revolution the consequences of which reached out and were felt beyond the confines of Europe. Its outcome was the split between Church and State. It is true that the effects of the Revolution were not at once apparent everywhere, nor ultimately felt in the same way; but inevitably the rift between Church and State left the Church to fend for herself: to further her work, to fulfil her mission, to safeguard her special rights and liberty of action, was henceforth to be her own responsibility. The need brought forth the appropriate response in the form of a number of Catholic movements under the leadership of priests and laymen. United in aim and in loyalty—and herein lay their strength and influence for good—these movements gathered in the mass of the faithful to meet the challenge and in the end to overcome the threat. Here surely is the beginning of the apostolate of the laity.

On this solemn occasion it is Our duty, and one that gives Us

great happiness, to remind you of all those people, priests and laymen, men and women, who have taken their part in such movements for God and the Church; their names deserve to be held in honour by all men. In the beginning they wore themselves out in the struggle, but all the time using their forces to greater advantage as the isolated units were gradually united and unified. These were scarcely days opportune for a Congress such as you have just had. Indeed, it is only within the last fifty years that the apostolate of the laity has grown to the fullness of its perfection. The reason for this is obvious enough. Under the influence of a quickening tempo in the ebb and flow of history, those forces which hitherto for so many years have divided man into opposing camps, for or against God, the Church and religion, have gained considerably in momentum, so that the evil of disruption is now to be found eating into the heart of nations, nay, within the very hearth itself.

It is true that there is a large mass of people, drifting, wavering, pulled now one way now another by the opposing forces of good and evil, like so much flotsam caught in the slip-water at the meeting of contrary tides. Religion for them is not yet moribund, but it has little or no meaning and plays no part in the shaping and directing of their lives. Yet we know from experience that they cannot go on avoiding the issue indefinitely. Sooner or later they will be forced to make a decision and declare themselves. In her universal mission the Church has a threefold task: to stir up the faithful to a realisation of the crying needs of our times; to invite into the warmth, friendship and security of the fold those who are hesitating at its threshold; to recall the lost sheep whom she can never abandon to their sad fate. What could be more glorious than this? And yet how difficult it is to achieve because of the fact that the numbers of her priests do not increase in proportion to the ever growing needs of the Church. Moreover, before all else the priest must perform the work which is peculiarly his, since that is an office which no one else can undertake. For this reason the support of the faithful in the work of the apostolate is an absolute necessity. Just how important and valuable is this help can be seen in times of war when one can appreciate the sense of comradeship among one's fellow soldiers or prisoners of war. Where there is something in common, whether it be in one's daily work, or at home, or in some misfortune shared by others, that common element can be a powerful instrument for good; and this is especially true in matters of religion. Sheer force of circumstances, then, as we have seen in the few examples quoted, and there are many more besides, has brought it about that the laity should take an ever increasing share in the apostolic work of the Church.

There is no need for Us to state in detail what is involved in being a lay apostle. We have spoken at length on this subject on

other occasions; and the number of suggestions made and the variety of experiences exchanged during your Congress make repetition on that score unnecessary. We shall do no more, therefore, than offer a few suggestions which may throw more light on one or other of the outstanding problems.

1. All the faithful without exception are members of the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ. And so all are obliged, not only by the natural law but also more explicitly by divine positive law, to give a good example of a truly christian life. 'We are the good odour of Christ unto God in them that are saved and in them that perish' (2 Cor. 2, 15). At his prayers and at Mass each one must pray not only for his intentions but also, and with what fruit in these days, for the spread of the kingdom of God on earth; and each must pray in the spirit of the Our Father, the prayer which Christ himself gave to us as our model.

We cannot, however, say that all are called in an equal measure to the apostolate, if we understand that word in its strictest sense. For God has not given to all the opportunity and the necessary ability for such an undertaking. The mother of a family, for example, is busy bringing up her children to a truly christian way of life, and often, if the children are to be properly nourished, she has to work in the home to eke out the meagre earnings of her husband. For such as these, active work in the apostolate is clearly out of the question. Yet it is no easy matter to draw the line of demarcation and limit the apostolate in so precise a way as to be able to say who among the laity are apostles and who are not. Are we to include education among the works of the apostolate, whether it be given at home by the mother or at school by zealous teachers? What of the Catholic doctor who steadfastly refuses to act contrary to the natural and divine laws in following his profession, who proclaims and defends the dignity of married life and safeguards the rights of the children; is he an apostle? Or again, there is the Catholic statesman who devotes himself to the cause of the less fortunate members of society.

There are many who would question the right of these educators, doctors and statesmen to the title of apostle, seeing in their work, which they concede to be admirable, no more than their common duty.

But we know what a unique and powerful weapon in the struggle for souls is the humble performance of one's duty by countless millions of conscientious and exemplary christians.

The Lay Apostolate, in the strict sense, is undoubtedly part and parcel of Catholic Action and takes the form of different societies and groups approved by the Church for specific apostolic work. But it is at the same time wider in extent than that; it claims as apostles all those men and women who, in an effort to bring men to the truth and to the life of grace, seize upon every opportunity to do good by whatever means present them-

selves. And We cannot forget the many excellent laymen who are living in countries where the Church is persecuted as she was in the first centuries of the christian era. Risking life itself, they fill, as best they can, the place of the priests who have been carried off to prison; they instruct men in the faith, teaching them how to live and think aright, encourage them to come to the Sacraments and awaken in them the spirit of devotion and reverence, especially for the Blessed Sacrament. We would ask you to see these people as so many labourers working in the vineyard of Christ. Do not be narrow-minded, nor trouble to inquire what organisation or society they belong to; rather be ready to acknowledge and admire the good that they are doing.

We are not decrying, be it carefully noted, or underestimating the value of groups specially organised for particular tasks in the apostolate; on the contrary We hold such group movements in the highest esteem, more especially in a world where the enemies of the Church are themselves organised in their opposition. But what We are stressing is that the need for organisation must never be allowed to drain the apostolate of its life-blood and make of it an effete and esoteric cult; for then we should be counted among those whom the Apostle speaks of as coming in 'to spy out our liberty' (Gal. 2, 4). Even within your organised groups each individual should be given scope to exercise to the full his various talents and gifts in whatever serves 'unto good, to edification' (Rom. 15, 2). Let it, then, be a matter for rejoicing when you find others not of your rank, 'led by the spirit of God' (Gal. 5, 18), winning souls for Christ.

2. *The roles of the clergy and the laity in the apostolate.* It is obvious that the lay apostolate cannot be exercised independently of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, since by divine institution the work of the apostolate belongs to the clergy by right of office. To deny this essential subordination would be to undermine the very foundation upon which Christ built his Church. But it would still be false to imagine that within the diocese at least, the Church regards the apostolate of the laity and that of the clergy as essentially equal, so that not even the Bishop would have the power to submit parochial activities to the jurisdiction of the parish priest. The Bishop certainly has this power and he can decree that no apostolic work should be performed by the laity within the parish without the permission of the priest in charge. The parish priest is the shepherd appointed by the Bishop to watch over the flock within the parish and so he is responsible for the care of those under his jurisdiction.

It is no less true, and for the same reason, that the parish priest has jurisdiction over his subjects even when they are engaged in works of an apostolic nature which are not strictly parochial or diocesan; the common good of the Church requires this.

In Our address to the Italian Catholic Action Movement (3 May, 1951), We made it clear that the subordination of the lay apostolate to the clergy admits of varying degrees. The closest possible co-operation must exist between the clergy and Catholic Action organisations; for Catholic Action is an instrument in the hands of the hierarchy, as it were a member of the ecclesiastical body and so necessarily responsive and obedient to the will of that body. The other apostolic activities of the faithful, whether organised or not, are best left as free from control as possible, though the amount of freedom will vary according to purpose of the work. We need hardly say that whatever initiative is shown by the laity in the furtherance of the apostolate, it should in every case be kept within the bounds of orthodoxy and should never contradict the legitimate decree of the competent ecclesiastical superior.

When We make use of a current expression and liken the lay apostle, or rather We should say the Catholic Actionist, to an instrument in the hands of the hierarchy, what We mean is that clerics are to use Catholic Action in the way that the Creator and Lord of all uses man as his instruments, namely, as secondary, co-operating causes, disposing them 'with great favour' (Sap. 12. 18). The clergy should be fully conscious of their grave responsibility in this matter; they should help to encourage the faithful in the apostolate, gladly listen to their suggestions and plans, and be ready and willing to accept them whenever possible. In the decisive battles of history it is sometimes the initiative and drive of the front line troops that win the day. Examples of this kind in the history of the Church are no less numerous.

It is desirable that relations between priest and people in the work of the apostolate should be, in general, as happy as possible. There should be no question of one vieing with the other. The sort of talk We sometimes hear about the 'emancipation of the laity' is highly displeasing to Us. Not only is it distasteful, it is, besides, a distortion of history. The great leaders of the past one hundred and fifty years, the period of history We spoke of earlier in Our address, can hardly be regarded as children under tutelage yearning to be free of an irksome restriction. A truth too often overlooked is this: in the kingdom of grace there are no children, all are adult.

The call for help addressed to the laity is neither the result of any negligence on the part of the clergy, nor of their inability to meet the demands of their office. Individual failures there must inevitably be, human nature being what it is; but they are to be found in every walk of life. In general the priest is not less acute than the layman to discern the signs of the times, nor is he any less attentive to the cries of those in need. The layman is asked to assist the priest in the work of saving souls because the shortage of priests makes it impossible for them to

fulfil their mission satisfactorily without the invaluable help of the laity.

3. Dearest sons and daughters, it will be well to remind ourselves of the very practical work achieved and still carried on through the lay apostolate in every sphere of life both private and public. During these days you have been examining and discussing some of the results of that work. Wherever christian marriage is served, there you will find the lay apostle, helping with the problems of marriage and the family, jealous for the rights of the children in the family and in questions of education and schooling, freely giving of his time for the running of clubs for boys and girls; in the service of his neighbour outside the family circle he is no less active, promoting works of charity as numerous and varied as the needs themselves, organising social services as remedy for the mental and physical sickness of his fellows; the support of the missions naturally claims his attention and he is not unaware of the good to be done in helping those who are going abroad or coming into the country; he is no stranger to university circles, where the intellectual difficulties of the cultured and educated classes have to be met, while his lively interest and his deep knowledge of sports topics and games brings him into contact with yet another section of the community; and lastly, though by no means the least among the works of the apostolate, he is to be found influencing public opinion for good in the many ways in which that is possible.

We commend and praise all your efforts in this direction and We wish especially to praise the spirit of goodwill and the zeal that are yours; that zeal and goodwill have been so obviously manifest during the Congress and it is these same qualities, such is their influence for good, that have made the Congress such a success.

There is a tendency in the world today, alas, even among Catholics, to limit severely the Church's sphere of action to what are called 'purely religious' functions. We know only too well what is meant: let the Church reign supreme in the sanctuary if she will so long as she leaves men free to find out for themselves the answers to their problems and needs. We beg of you to oppose this pernicious attitude.

It is unfortunately the case that in certain countries the Church is obliged to confine her activities to within the four walls of the house of God; but even there she must do whatever she possibly can. She will never willingly or freely relinquish her rights on any score.

The law of Christ must necessarily and in every respect touch the lives of men whether as individuals or as members of society. It is, then, inevitable that in the affairs of Church and State there should be close interplay. Politics, as the root (*polis*) suggests, means the good government of the State. But the well-

being of a country is not something achieved by means of the laws of the State alone; that would be to minimise the richness and extent of the concept of the common good. Laws of a higher kind operate whenever things like marriage, the family, the rights of children, the schools, to take but a few examples, are under discussion; and these laws must be recognised and complied with even within the sphere of the State. These are things intimately bound up with religion and no one who is indifferent to such issues can call himself an apostle. In the Address We mentioned earlier (3 May, 1951) We made it clear that Catholic Action should not allow itself to become entangled in party politics. But what We said to the members of the Olivant Conference (28 March, 1948) is equally true: 'however praiseworthy it may be to hold oneself aloof from the petty quarrels of party politics . . . it would be, nevertheless, a matter for blame if we were to stand aside and leave the government of the country to unworthy or incapable men'. What, then, is the golden mean at which the lay apostle should aim? No hard and fast rule can be laid down for all. Different circumstances and temperaments must obviously be taken into account in arriving at a decision.

We warmly approve your resolutions; they are an expression of your determination to rise above merely national interests in order to establish friendly relationships and a christian understanding with all men. If there is a force in the world today capable of breaking down the miserable barriers of prejudice and party politics which keep men apart, one able to resolve the differences, heal the wounds and re-unite men in a common bond of trust, that force is the Catholic Church. And it is your joy and honour to help the Church in her task.

No more fitting conclusion could be found for your conferences than those words of St Paul, the Apostle of all nations: 'For the rest, brethren, rejoice, be perfect, take exhortation, be of one mind, have peace. And the God of peace and of love shall be with you' (2 Cor. 13, 11). And his last words to the Corinthians, 'The grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ and charity of God and the communication of the Holy Ghost be with you all' (2 Cor., 13, 13), express in one sentence the sum total of what the lay apostle strives to bring to his fellow men. May that same grace be with you all.

God grant Our final prayer on your behalf and bestow upon you and upon all the faithful every blessing and every good gift. In token of Our unbounded love and esteem We extend to you all Our Apostolic blessing.

REVIEWS

A HISTORY OF THE CURE OF SOULS. By John McNeill, Professor of Church History at Union Theological College, New York. (London: Student Christian Movement Press; 25s.)

The *cura animarum*, the author reminds us, means not only the cure but also the care of souls, and all that pertains to it. And as though the history of this *cura animarum* in Christendom alone were not matter enough for 330 pages, the author offers us opening chapters on 'The Guides of Israel', on Greek and Roman 'Philosophers as Physicians of the Soul', and on 'Spiritual Direction in Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism and Islam'. Brief and compressed though these introductory chapters are, we cannot complain that they are superfluous. They are among the best in the book, and give the rest a needed perspective. Moreover, in contrasting the uncritical obedience to authority demanded by the Hindu *guru* with the independent, illusionless, ruthlessly 'criticised life' fostered by the 'soul-healer' Socrates, he sets the two extreme opposite poles between which the principles and practice of the *cura animarum* have continually oscillated. We suspect that a closer examination of 'guruism' on the one side, and of the Socratic method on the other, would suggest that the opposition is not so extreme as might be supposed, but as an expository device it is helpful and thought-provoking.

Just a hundred pages cover the *cura animarum* in the New Testament and down to the dawn of the Reformation. Only now may the sympathetic reader realise what a Herculean task the author has undertaken, and cease to marvel why (apparently) nobody has ever attempted a comprehensive history of the cure of souls before. He will marvel less that so much is omitted than that so much has been included; he will not complain (for he will know it is unavoidable) that he is often presented rather with a selection of interesting *faits divers* than a coherent, scientific history. But what, he must ask, is the principle of selection? The author is known among scholars for his editions and studies of Celtic and medieval 'penitentials', and although he is well aware that in all periods there was much more to the *cura animarum* than purely disciplinary decrees and exercises, they still occupy a quite a disproportionate prominence in his general picture. Again, this is probably unavoidable. These 'penitentials' and kindred documents are solid material for the historian, while (as Dr McNeill recognises) the secrets of the confessional and the more intimate communings of soul with soul, and even much public popular preaching during most of these 1,500 years, has left

very little documentary record. Never can they become written history. And if this is true of external, verbal counsel in the *cura animarum*, it is still more so of the interior workings of the sacraments other than that of Penance, of sacramentals, ritual, contemplation and prayer. By themselves, a manual for confessors and a Codex of Canon Law would give a very misleading idea of the contemporary practice of confession, and the addition of a few published pastoral letters would hardly give a balanced (and scarcely a flattering) picture of the *cura animarum* in our own day. Yet a historian has little else for his picture of the past, and Dr McNeill has set himself not only a difficult but an impossible task.

But we must be grateful to him for the attempt, and our gratitude is enhanced when, throughout the remaining half of his book, he sets out to portray the principles and practice of the *cura animarum* in all the larger denominations of Christendom since the Reformation. For most of these he has relied not only on written evidence, but on the personal experience of their members. Most of these portraits are, in consequence, drawn with engaging sympathy and understanding (the chapter on 'The Cure of Souls in the Anglican Communion' is particularly attractive), but never without critical detachment. The chapter on 'The Cure of Souls in Roman Catholicism' appears to rely on documentary evidence alone, and again legalistic manuals for confessors occupy a position out of all proportion to their actual importance—excessive though this may have been during the post-Reformation period. An experienced Catholic consultant might have abated some of the author's worries about an undue concern with particular sins at the expense of radical sin, and have urged that some celebrated castigations of spiritual directors from St Theresa and St John of the Cross (who are not mentioned at all) offset his picture of the unlimited confidence and uncritical obedience required for them in later Catholicism.

Whatever may be thought of the 'Groups' of Frank Buchman, their success or failure, they surely represent an important experiment in the cure of souls in our own century, and it is surprising that they are not mentioned.

In his 'Conclusion' there is some sound sense on 'the effective correlation of religious and scientific psychotherapy' joined to a due understanding of their essential differences. Throughout the book there are many sound observations and shrewd judgments; an instructed Catholic will know how to make due allowances for the author's non-Catholic, but never anti-Catholic, viewpoint. Unsatisfactory as the book must be as a complete—or even as a rightly balanced—history of the whole subject, it should widen the reader's horizons, alter his perspectives and compel him to question many assumptions in contemporary pastoral practice which he may otherwise suppose to be age-long, universal and

unalterable. Few among us can be so content with the present condition of the *cura animarum* as to suppose it is past the possibility of criticism or improvement, and that it has nothing to learn from other times and climes.

VICTOR WHITE, O.P.

THE PASCHAL MYSTERY. By Louis Bouyer, translated by Sister Mary Benoit, R.S.M. (Allen and Unwin; 18s.)

It is true, unfortunately, that liturgy and especially 'liturgical movement' have acquired a bad name in this country among the majority of clergy and laity. That is due very largely to a misunderstanding of the nature of the first mentioned and, to a still greater extent, to the erroneous notions of some propagators of the second who seem to have mistaken ritualism and all that it connotes for the worship of the Body of Christ. Viewed from the twofold aspect of what it is and what it does, this worship is the whole expression of Christianity, for the whole mystery is contained within it. It is for this reason that Père Bouyer's book is important. 'Meditations on the last three days of Holy Week' runs the sub-title, but it is very much more than that. 'The Christian religion', he tells us, 'is not simply a doctrine: it is a fact . . . and an action, not of the past but of the present, where the past is recovered and the future draws near. Thus it embodies a mystery of faith, for it declares to us that each day makes our own the action that Another accomplished long ago, the fruits of which we shall see only later in ourselves.' Consequently, during these last days of Holy Week, 'together with its changeless Head, the Mystical Body, ever renewed, partakes of the Last Supper, is stretched upon the cross and descends into the tomb to rise again on the third day. This is the paschal mystery.'

The book, then, is a synthesis of the whole of Christianity, and through the *paschale sacramentum* which it expounds by means of Christ's celebration of it we are brought into touch with those sources which are the basis of a Christian culture; in other words the book draws largely on the Bible and the Fathers, though it is by no means confined to them: the medieval commentators, Newman, de Bérulle, and even John Keble are laid under contribution. We are shown how the paschal mystery is the central mystery of our religion, a synthesis of all Christian life and indeed of the Church herself, for both are a *pasch*. Christian life and the Church—which is made up of God's chosen people—are the 'passage' from the first creation to the second, from this world to the kingdom of God, from Egypt to the promised land through the great mystery of death and resurrection, pre-figured in the first place by the Jewish *pasch* and passage of the Red Sea, founded on and derived from Christ's passage from this world to his Father, represented in the sacraments

which are its continual celebration and a reality of Christian life.

This view of the Church's celebration of the paschal mystery shows clearly how central it is not only in our religion (that hardly needs saying) but also in worship. One of the merits of the book is that it demonstrates conclusively this unity of faith and worship. Everything, almost, from the Matins of Maundy Thursday to the first Mass of Easter is explained: each office, each scriptural pericope, all the great biblical themes and symbols are commented on with a depth of learning and sensitive perception that are quite uncommon and refreshing indeed to read. It is not, of course, a book for popular reading but it is to be hoped that it will be studied and digested by those whose duty it is to teach religion, to preach or write articles about Christian religion.

The translator has rendered a great service to her English-speaking co-religionists. Not all the renderings will meet with general agreement but on the whole the book reads well, though occasional glimpses of the French peep through. She does well to substitute the titles of English translations (where such exist) of books quoted in the text, though for a future edition it may be worthwhile to point out that de Lubac's *Catholicism* has been translated into English and that some of the books which are given French titles were originally written in another language (works, for example, by Dom Casel, Nicholas Cabasilas), and this fact should be indicated. It is a pity, too, that the publisher has seen fit to advertise two works of Loisy's at the end of the book.

LANCELOT C. SHEPPARD

ISAIAH 40-55: Introduction and Commentary. By Christopher R. North. (In the series *Torch Bible Commentaries*: S.C.M. Press; 8s. 6d.)

This series of slender volumes is intended 'to provide the general reader with the soundest possible assistance in understanding the message of each book considered as a whole and as a part of the Bible. The findings and views of modern critical scholarship . . . have been taken fully into account' (from the Foreword to the series). The scholarship of the present volume is fully guaranteed by the name of the author, who, a Baptist, is Professor of Hebrew at Bangor and one of the leaders of Old Testament studies in the country.

The commentary deals with the middle section of the Book of Isaiah, frequently called 'Deutero-Isaiah' as distinct from the original Isaiah (Is. 1-39) of the eighth century in Jerusalem, and from 'Trito-Isaiah' (Is. 56-66). The notion that the chapters after 39 are not by the same author as the preceding dates from Doederlein in 1775 and Eichhorn in 1780, when II Isaiah was placed in the Babylonian Exile in the sixth century. The idea of distinguishing III Isaiah dates from Duhm in 1892, who dated

chapters 56-66 after the rebuilding of the Temple and the coming of Nehemiah (516-444). This view of the three distinct works included in the Book of Isaiah is, though not completely proven, generally held by non-Catholics, and it will be remembered that the Catholic scholar Mgr Kissane in his commentary (1941-3) presents the second part of the Book as an exilic 'write-up' of material belonging to the original Isaiah, thus still maintaining the traditional unity of the Book, while also explaining very obvious differences. Professor North accepts, and expounds very clearly, the threefold theory. But he also reminds us (p. 13) that the Book of Isaiah was already accepted as a whole as early as the second century B.C., a fact which has had striking corroboration in the discovery in 1947 of a single scroll of Isaiah among the 'Dead Sea Scrolls' which probably go back to that period.

Professor North's commentary is brief and to the point, it is mainly textual and historical (on the background of Babylon).

The essay on interpretation (pp. 26-36) is valuable, as explaining the 'mythological interpretation': 'if there is anything more in the prophecy than pure vapourings, such an interpretation seems absolutely necessary. . . . A myth is not just any fanciful or untrue story. Myths are related in all seriousness. They may relate to the past, or they may relate to the future. . . . A myth may be told about something that happened before the dawn of history, in order to explain a situation with which we are confronted and which must have come about somehow. Such a myth is the story of the Fall. . . . A myth may also refer to the future. It is then a description of something which lies beyond the horizons of any future that we can envisage. . . . When we say of Christ that "he sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead", we are speaking the language of mythology. . . . The Second Isaiah lived at a crisis in the history of his people. Something was about to happen. What he depicted was . . . transcended by what did happen six centuries later. . . .' (pp. 26-27.) This is really helpful, and it leads on to the question of the interpretation of the 'Servant' passages. Professor North summarises very concisely the various methods of interpretation, concluding with the Christian Messianic interpretation, in which the vocation of Israel symbolised in the Servant comes to a head in Christ, and through Christ is inherited by the Church.

SEBASTIAN BULLOUGH. O.P.

ST BERNARD 'ON THE SONG OF SONGS'. Translated and edited by a Religious of C.S.M.V. (Mowbrays; 12s. 6d.)

If one could, in itself a foolish wish, have chosen to live in some other place and period, the opportunity of being present in

Chapter when St Bernard poured out the *Sermones in Cantica* would have a serious claim to selection. Reading them over again, even in short extracts, one finds no better proof of their universal character than the number of ideas, lightly accepted as part of our spiritual heritage, which one runs to earth there. Just as in our daily speech the tags of Shakespeare are often on the lips of those who seldom if ever turn to the plays, so a devout reflection is frequently a dim reminder of Bernard's genuine honey. Less metaphysically-minded, less withdrawn, usually less penetrating than his friend and admirer William of St Thierry, not so intimate as Aelred, one understands afresh why he was the natural leader of that monastic revival which spread through Europe with such astounding rapidity. For he had some indefinable attribute, the mark of the man of genius, which makes him appear among his contemporaries always a little larger than life. The incandescent quality of his thought transforms what it touches. Gifted, as every page bears witness, with a rare sense of language which would have made outstanding whatever he turned to, he will not be content with the making of a book. He creates a world.

One unmistakable theme gives unity to all the diverse matter with which the eighty-six sermons of this unfinished commentary on the *Canticle* are crowded. It is the call not merely to know God by faith, but to become one spirit with him by charity, to 'taste and see how gracious the Lord is'. It would, however, be possible to exaggerate the amount of time which St Bernard devotes to the exposition of his properly mystical doctrine. There is a great deal of moral and ascetical instruction adapted to the needs of a community whose members are at every stage of development. St Bernard has a marked fondness for the image of our Lord as Shepherd, and fully in accordance with St Benedict's picture of the abbot, he never forgets his duty to the little ones of the flock. If what he says on some occasions must have been beyond them, he can never have been anything other than an encouraging master from whom to learn. Again and again he loves to repeat St John's words, 'He first loved us'. It is always Christ who is looking for us before we are looking for him, who is as it were compassionately prejudiced in our favour, more ready to give than we to receive.

It seems almost an impertinence to praise the translation of parts of these sermons which one of the Wantage Sisters has here given us. Her work is a little masterpiece and communicates something of the joy she has obviously felt in doing it. It is completely free from mannerisms, dignified, yet never bookish, and constantly refreshed by the bold choice of a firm, strong noun, where the temptation would have been to select a vague, 'poetic' one. Consequently, in a seemingly effortless way the English often succeeds in recalling the musical effect of the original. Take for instance a few sentences from one of the most

familiar of all passages: 'O little while, and little while, O lengthy little while! Good Lord, dost thou call that a little while in which we do not see Thee? With all good respect to thy word, my Lord, I must confess that it is long to me—yes, much too long. Yet it is right to call that time both short and long, for it is short compared with our deserts, and very long indeed to our desires.'

The selection of extracts is always skilful, and one gets from it a very balanced impression of the whole. There are of course many sacrifices, some of which it would have been outside the Sister's immediate purpose to include—the moving lament for Gerard, or, by contrast, the witty passage in Sermon XXX on the kind of monk who is over-finicky in his diet, both of which she would doubtless have rendered excellently. Indeed, if we had one complaint it would be that she has underestimated our powers of endurance. Making her excuses for not translating the whole, she alludes to two translations already in existence, and also to the fact that 'few people nowadays would read such a long book'. We think they would, if only she would consent to translate it.

A.S.

BLESSED JAN VAN RUYSBROECK: THE SPIRITUAL ESPOUSALS.

Translated from the Dutch, with an Introduction, by Eric Colledge. (Faber; 18s.)

The waning of the middle ages saw the beginning of a new spiritual movement which was to have the most far-reaching consequences in the life of the Church. Scholars have of late been turning their attention towards discovering the origins and describing the course of this movement to which they have given the name of *Devotio Moderna*. It is certain that the philosophers and saints of the Low Countries played no small part in its development: from there came that little book called *The Imitation of Christ* which probably more than any other book before or since has guided souls along the paths of prayer and the devout life. But the work of Thomas à Kempis, if he was indeed the author of *The Imitation*, was the result of his training at the school which Geert Groote had founded at Deventer in 1387. The Augustinian mystic, Jan van Ruysbroek, whose principal treatise on the contemplative life has here been translated by Mr Colledge from the fourteenth-century Dutch, is in truth the father of this movement in the Netherlands. It may be said that his mysticism is more of a practical than a speculative cast, and in this he approximates more nearly to the English school—he is contemporary to the author of *The Cloud of Unknowing*—than to the Spanish precursors of St John of the Cross. He is concerned with the means whereby mystical union is to be attained rather than with its metaphysical implications. The work under

review is divided into the three classic books called: I The Active Life, II The Life of Yearning for God, and III The Life of Contemplation of God; though the last one, as would be expected since the author's object is primarily practical, is extremely short compared with the other two. The translation reads well, and the introduction is scholarly: probably the best short account in English of Ruysbroek's doctrine, though readers who hitherto have only known Ruysbroek through the carefully annotated French edition of his works prepared by the monks of Oosterhout may be surprised that no mention is made of these volumes in the bibliography. Bl. Jan van Ruysbroek was beatified by Bl. Pius X in 1908.

DESMOND SCHLEGEL, O.S.B.

THE GOAD OF LOVE: an unpublished translation by Walter Hilton of *Stimulus Amoris* formerly attributed to St Bonaventura, now edited from MSS by Clare Kirchberger. (London: Faber and Faber; 18s.)

This edition of Walter Hilton's version of *Stimulus Amoris* is greatly to be welcomed. It is a beautiful piece of work and it contains some important implication for readers of today. There is a good introduction explaining the sources used by Hilton, and there are some interesting comments on the changes which he introduced showing his own original contribution. The most significant of these is the constant translation of such words as *Deus* and *Creator* by 'Christ' and 'Our Lord'. This Christocentric character, with its emphasis on the Incarnation, was the immediate result of the need to counteract the heresies of the day and the false mysticism which disregarded the Humanity of Christ, and also the practice of the virtues. It was the expression, too of the traditional English devotion to the Holy Name of Jesus, to the Passion and to our Lady. But the fundamental reason, as the introduction shows, lies in the Faith itself—in the 'law' of the Incarnation whereby we can only reach God through the Person of Christ.

Several very striking impressions are left by this book: one of them is the almost complete absence of any detailed analysis of the states of prayer. This shows us, we are told, a poetical affective side of Hilton's nature which is much more evident here than in the more schematised work of *The Scale of Perfection*. We are here brought into touch with that simple, direct approach to God, without any 'spiritual gymnastics'. We are reminded that this approach was shown, in *Brother Petroc's Return*¹, to be the mark distinguishing medieval from post-Reformation spirituality. A further impression—closely linked with this simplicity—is Hilton's insistence on self-forgetfulness.

¹ *Brother Petroc's Return: A Story* by S.M.C. Chatto and Windus.

This attitude is indicated early in the book in the words: 'First, then, let thy heart be so oned to him in longing that it be his and not thine'. Again and again he omits passages which seemed to have a self-centred emphasis. This appears in his treatment of the virtues of humility and obedience which he stresses so forcibly. 'Obedience', he writes, 'is a gracious virtue that maketh a man to forget himself and aye tend to his Lord.' He warns us continually against the dangers of pride in the contemplative life, and above everything he warns us against any inclination to judge our neighbours. All prayer is the free gift of God: 'think in all things, God doeth all, and then mayest thou come to rest'.

This life of prayer does not necessarily imply a withdrawal from other activities; but can be arrived at through all things by the unity of their relationship to God: seeing and beholding 'right nought in all things but God himself'. At the same time he adds: 'I reprove not great yearnings and lovely longings that some men have to God, that give themselves only to attend to him in contemplation and to nothing else, for that is good'. But the one thing on which he insists is that we come to God through the humanity of Christ: 'He that cometh not by the bitterness and compassion of Christ in his manhood, he is but a thief'.

In the Preface it is suggested that the reader should, if he wishes, omit the first nine chapters. But if he does so he will miss some of the most characteristic expressions of that deep compassion with the sufferings of our Lord.

For us today this work has many attractions. It offers us a vision of mystical life in closest union with normal Christian life; never as an extraordinary state treated in isolation. It restores for us the unity of Christian experience, much of which had been lost since the Reformation. Most important of all, its Christocentric character will appeal to all who wish to see individual prayer centred in the living expression of the Incarnation, which is the Sacramental worship of the Church in Holy Mass, and drawing from this source all its strength.

ODO BROOKE, O.S.B.

LE CHRIST, MARIE ET L'EGLISE. By Yves M.-J. Congar, O.P.
(Desclée De Brouwer; n.p.)

This short book, of just over a hundred pages, is one of the most stimulating and thought-provoking to appear for some time, and it is to be hoped that it will soon find a competent translator. It consists of two essays, the first of which was previously published in *La Vie Intellectuelle* of October last year to commemorate the fifteenth centenary of the Council of Chalcedon. The second gives a negative answer to the question whether Catholic piety towards Christ, the Church and Mary has always succeeded in avoiding a monophysite tendency. And 'Catholic piety' for Père Congar does not only mean popular manifestations

of devotion: he is careful to show that many respected theologians have themselves been guilty of, to say the least, inaccuracies of expression. But, to remain entirely orthodox is rather like walking a tight-rope. An occasional false step is no shame provided one is willing to accept then the help of the divinely appointed guide-line. The wording of the liturgical prayers is often used by Père Congar as a corrective to the theologians (and not the other way round, as we see sometimes), for is it not true that, for Catholics, the liturgy is '*la grande éducatrice de la pensée et le la prière*'?

DESMOND SCHLEGEL, O.S.B.

EDITH STEIN. By Sister Teresia de Spiritu Sancto. (Sheed and Ward; 12s. 6d.)

In this book, dedicated to the memory of Edith Stein, the author, Sister Teresia Renata de Spiritu Sancto, has taken upon herself a grateful task. She has rendered a service to all of us today, and generations to come may consider themselves fortunate that such a book was forthcoming from Germany's most bitter times. The book proves in a very clear and moving way that a Jewess, too, can be deeply pious and religious; and this saintly life should arouse the sleepy conscience of many half-hearted and perfunctory Christians of the Catholic Church. Edith is love and kindness itself; plain and simple in her way of life from without. She does not strive for fame and honour; her outstanding spiritual qualifications and her enviable command of the knowledge of philosophy cannot alter her humble character. Her clear and well-balanced way of thinking forms her spiritual life and allows us to recognise, with admiration, a certain greatness in her personality. Highly gifted for metaphysics and mysticism, Edith Stein found her inner peace in the intensive study of thomism which finally caused her to enter the Order of the Carmelites.

Professor Edmund Husserl, the founder of Phenomenology, appointed her as his assistant. But even then she remained the lay nun. Her aim was pacification of the soul, and she was not in search of theses. The works of Edith Stein tell of her mastery of Catholic principles. When reading these works, the biography is the commentary and at the same time a guide to her Catholic knowledge—understandable, of course, only to those who take it seriously. The doctrine of the cross by Edith Stein can become clear only if one were able to meet her personally, or read the book of the prioress. For her, to carry the cross does not mean to suffer. Suffering as such is only an auxiliary means of carrying—bearing—the cross. For Edith Stein it was a joyful event. The knowledge she acquired enabled her to have the natural healthy talent of harmonising with Christian ideas. For her it was the key to the understanding of all human weaknesses which she

overcame with prominent generosity. In this she shows her transition from the Old Testament, from laws and regulations to the Epistle of St James of the second, third and fourth Sundays after Pentecost, establishing the truth that piety and religiousness have their roots in the Old Testament. Honesty against herself, the vast knowledge of the Latin language, the mastery of secular philosophy were not only used by her for rational belief, but also for an exploration of the greatest importance. The fundamental point of Edith Stein's personality was her unshaken confidence in the cross, to which she clung magnanimously, right to the Auschwitz Camp in Poland, as the Dutch Minister of Justice wrote in his letter of November 16th, 1950.

JOSEPH W. JUROWSKY

THE WORLD OF SILENCE. By Max Picard. Translated by Stanley Godman. (Harvill Press; 12s. 6d.)

METAPHYSICAL JOURNAL. By Gabriel Marcel. Translated by Bernard Wall. (Rockliff; 30s.)

The fact that Marcel has written an admiring Preface to Picard's book is a clear enough sign that these two authors have much in common. They are two of the ablest exponents of that prayerful thinking which is happily becoming more prevalent amongst Catholic writers. And it is interesting to notice that both of them follow the way of meditative thought which leads them to set down their insights from day to day, slowly (in the course of time and in harmony with the rhythm of life) drawing out the endless riches of these primary insights. Indeed, one hopes that more Catholics will develop the habit of keeping such note-books—even if they have no intention of publishing them—because it is a sure way of maintaining that continual growth in understanding which has led Marcel and Picard into the Church, and for lack of which so many of the faithful become stunted. Nor is stunting the worst that happens, for conversations with people who have lost their faith reveal that they frequently give up thinking before they give up praying. Warnings against that curious conceit known as 'simple faith' have recently been echoed in the pages of this review; the reading of these two books is one effective way of heeding these warnings.

Not that Marcel's *Metaphysical Journal* will prove of very great interest to those who have already studied his thought in the works that have previously been translated into English. Even Bernard Wall's skilful translation cannot be expected to convey the fresh thrill which one experienced on first reading Marcel. But for those who have not yet experienced that thrill the study of the *Metaphysical Journal* will afford the opportunity to live from day to day with a profound human being as he thought himself towards faith during the years between 1914 and 1923.

On the other hand—possibly because Stanley Godman inter-

prets Picard so sensitively, or because Picard's thought wells up directly from the springs of life—I found *The World of Silence* as fresh in translation as when I first read it in the original. It is a masterly book, reminding one of those masters in the tales of the Chassidim who, by a single sentence or gesture, unite heaven and earth. In fact the similarity to the Jewish teachers strikes one as uncanny, until one realises that Picard shares with them the spirit of *Chessed*, that predominantly masculine spirit (free from sexual overtones) which one looks for in vain amongst so many Catholic books of spirituality.

Picard ranges widely over all those aspects of life which may be clothed in silence, from the movement of animals to the birth of the Word, from the silence of the lover to the achievement of the poet. He moves amongst these archetypal situations with the quiet assurance of the craftsman at his work; the reader feels like a spectator watching the craftsman as his work takes shape and become a substantial part of the world.

I hope that these sentences about Picard's book will convince readers of *LIFE OF THE SPIRIT* that it is one upon which they can nourish themselves continually, and be strengthened by it every time they return to it. If not, one quotation will give them some indication of its quality:

'What many preachers say about the Mystery of God is often lifeless and therefore ineffectual. What they say comes only from words jumbled up with many thousands of other words. It does not come from silence. But it is in silence that the first meeting between man and the Mystery of God is accomplished, and from silence the word also receives the power to become extraordinary as the Mystery of God is extraordinary. . . . It is true that man is able through the power of the spirit to give an elemental force to words, but the word that comes from silence is already elemental. The human mind has no need to spend itself in giving the word an elemental force that has already been given to it by the silence.'

Picard leaves one wondering whether the silencing of Christians in many parts of the world may not be a warning from God to those of us who have indulged in easy speeches that comfort our cruel hearts. Perhaps the raucous rallies must be dispersed, the silly clever reviews extinguished and our facile words forgotten, before the Word is born again in silence.

DONALD NICHOLL

THE SEMINARIAN AT HIS PRIE-DIEU. By Robert Nash, S.J. (M.H. Gill and Son, Ltd., Dublin; 15s.)

This volume of meditations has been written for those preparing for the priesthood either in seminaries or in religious houses. The author has done well to outline in the Introduction a method, based on that of St Ignatius, for the guidance of those not yet

familiar with the practice of mental prayer. In all there are thirty-eight meditations which give the impression of being rather diffuse. The author however suggests that only one point should be taken each day. To avoid repeating what is to be found in other books for seminarists, Fr Nash does not draw on the Rite of Ordination for his subject-matter, but turns primarily though not exclusively to the gospels. Those who use this book should find in it an aid both to the better understanding of their obligations as students for the priesthood and to progress in the spiritual life.

N. J. KELLY

NOTICES

In *MEN AGAINST HUMANITY* (Harvill; 18s.) M. Gabriel Marcel approaches the problem of human freedom today together with cognate problems from his own metaphysical standpoint, both profound and difficult. He explicitly excludes the religious approach to these problems (p. 88), because he insists that the philosopher must make his own special contribution; and there is no doubt about it that those who can must follow him into these realms to discover the nature of man and the nature of the contemporary attack upon him and in particular upon his spirit.

WIFE, MOTHER AND MYSTIC (Sands; 10s. 6d.) is the story of Bl. Anna-Maria Taigi, told by Père Bessières, S.J., and translated by Fr Stephen Rigby. She was married at twenty in 1790 and reared seven pleasing children, some of whom lived to make depositions at the beatification process of their mother. And her husband too was there to say: 'A year after our marriage . . . she gave up all the jewellery she used to wear and took to wearing the plainest possible clothes. She asked my permission for this and I gave it her with all my heart.' With such a promising family background she developed into a saint who spoke with our Lord and was constantly beset by devils. She was indeed a 'mystic' of the most extraordinary type, and her life was of special significance for the critical period in which she lived. She had a constant vision, a sun in which she followed the life of Napoleon and the evils of the times. The book, though rather jumbled in its plan, is of considerable interest, especially for those who seek holiness in married life. Readers should not be discouraged by the jacket, which gives the impression of 'Another Nineteenth-Century French Nun Beata'!

Desclée De Brouwer have published a French translation of Thomas Merton's *Waters of Silence* under the title *Aux sources du silence* which is pleasantly produced and illustrated with eight photographs of life at Gethsemani.

ADAPTATION has become almost a key word for modern religious, and Fr Lord, S.J., has considered its meaning carefully in his *LETTERS TO A NUN* (Clonmore and Reynolds; 17s. 6d.) which is meant for the modern nun. Fifty-five letters see the nun through her novitiate to her full life of responsibility in chapel and in the daily labours. Though many may have grown tired of the letter device, the sisters who read this will find much in it to profit them.

ASCENDING BY STEPS (Clonmore and Reynolds; 6s.) is a modern attempt by Fr William Stephenson, S.J., to help religious up the scale of perfection. It suffers perhaps from its composition. The first eight steps are practical considerations taken from afternoon retreat conferences, the second eight from short morning talks under similar circumstances. The doctrine of the book is general and the laity will find nothing exclusive about it.

EDEL MARY QUINN was an Irish woman who as a member of the Legion of Mary achieved prodigious results in her apostolic work in Central Africa; she died a holy death at Nairobi in 1944. Her book on the Apostolate is having a world-wide success, and now her biography is written by his Lordship Mgr Léon-Joseph Sueuens and published with the sub-title *Une Héroïne de l'Apostolat* by Desclée at Bruges (96 Belgian francs).

THE MEDIEVAL Morality Play 'Wisdom who is Christ' is the subject of a theological and historical interpretation by Fr J. J. Molloy, O.P., as a doctorate thesis at the Catholic University of America. He shows, contrary to previous rather half-hearted judgments, that the play in accurate theological terms unfolds the teaching about grace and the growth in perfection. It is a pity that the text of the morality could not have been published with this commentary. But the publication of this book is a welcome event that shows theologians at length turning their eyes on the English heritage. (Catholic University, Washington; and Providence College; n.p.)

MISS MAISIE SPENS has written several books of a metaphysical-mystical character. Her latest, 'RECEIVE THE JOYFULNESS OF YOUR GLORY' (Hodder and Stoughton; 15s.), is perhaps her best. Its theme is that of Sister Elizabeth of the Trinity, but extended to the whole of creation, which participates in the Transfiguration. The author's style however is not easy; 'would-be prayer-sharers' and such phrases were surely avoidable.

EXTRACTS

UNIGENITUS DEI FILIUS, the Apostolic letter of Pope Pius XI written in 1924 to the Heads of Religious Orders, is usefully resurrected in an English translation in *Review for Religious* (St Marys, Kansas) for July. The Pope writes:

Since it is of the highest importance that the knowledge of sacred science should be held in the greatest esteem and deeply imbibed by the ministers of the Church, the chief concern of this Our exhortation is to urge members of religious institutes, both those who are already priests and those who are candidates for the priesthood, to the study of the sacred learning, the absence of which would prevent them performing with full competence the functions of their vocation. For those who have consecrated themselves to God the one, or certainly the chief, obligation is that of prayer and the contemplation or meditation on divine things.

The Holy Father continues by insisting that all religious should continue without cessation their theological studies to assist them in their interior union with God.

GNOSTICISM true and false is brought out by contrast in *Sponsa Regis* (Collegeville, Minnesota) for July and *Vedanta and the West* (Los Angeles) for the same month. In the former A Carthusian of Miraflores writes of the doctrine of the Trinity and the controversies of the first centuries which seem to some 'only a barren strife about words'.

Such a concept is possible only to one who is profoundly ignorant of the relation of God to man in the spiritual life. On the outcome of these controversies depended the growth and the development of the relations between God and the soul of man in all the centuries that were to follow. . . . God is infinitely perfect intelligence. We must say of Him that He is intelligence rather than He possesses intelligence. . . .

And thus the Carthusian goes on to show how the Father knows himself in the Son and how we are caught up in the infinite flow of infinite intelligence and infinite love. The theology of the Blessed Trinity will never be fully absorbed by any Christian be he cleric, lay or religious, and therefore it will provide the centre of his necessary meditations and contemplation. But Aldous Huxley in *Vedanta and the West* speaks in a very different sense:

The obscure knowledge of what we really are accounts for our grief at having to seem to be what we are not, and for our often passionate desire to overstep the limits of the imprisoning ego.

The only truly liberating self-transcendence is into the knowledge of the primordial fact.

And this invasion into the infinite intelligence of God he describes: If we experience an urge to self-transcendence it is because, in some obscure way and in spite of our conscious ignorance, we know what we really are. We know (or to be more accurate, something within us knows) that the ground of our individual knowing is identical with the Ground of all knowing and all being; that the Atman (Mind in the act of choosing to take the temporal point of view) is the same as Brahman (Mind in its eternal essence).

The apparent similarity in some of the ideas of this school with those that try to express the true Mystery of the Logos shows how easy it is for anyone to weave his own fancies round the word of revealed religion and how necessary it is for true contemplation to be informed by accurate study.

The May-June issue of *Tydschrift voor Gestelijk Leven* is a double number devoted entirely to Penance, and is intended as a companion to a previous special number on the Eucharist (June 1951). There is first a general article on the Sacrament, followed by articles developing particular aspects—Contrition, Consciousness of Guilt, Examination of Conscience, The Penance, etc. All this gives, in the words of the editorial, 'a christian insight into the magnificence of the sacrament of penance; not mere theory alone, but the doctrine as lived, and with practical applications'.

Among the SOUTHERN HEBRIDES there exists a small island with the remains of an Augustinian Priory still standing. The island is called Oronsay, and George Scott Moncrieff writes of it in *The Scottish Islands* (Batsford):

Now the decay of the Priory buildings has been arrested by the Office of Works, and they stand a ruin substantial enough to be very pleasant. Iona apart, perhaps there is no place in all the Isles that more clearly demands rehabilitation and the return of a religious community able to put to true purpose the intense Hebridean loneliness, softened by the beauty of the green and purple sea and the bright turf and dark rocks; made various by the changing lights.

Perhaps one day we Catholics may take the initiative. . . .

Contributors are encouraged to submit original MSS. or translations from the Fathers. *Literary Communications* should be addressed to The Editor, Life of the Spirit, Blackfriars, Oxford (Tel. 3607). The Editor cannot be responsible for the loss of MSS. submitted, and no MS. will be returned unless accompanied by a stamped addressed envelope. *Subscriptions, Orders and Communications regarding Advertisements* should be addressed to The Manager, Blackfriars Publications, 34 Bloomsbury Street, London, W.C.1 (Museum 5728). Annual Subscription 17s. 6d. post free (U.S.A. \$2.50). *Binding: Orders and Enquiries for binding volumes of the review may be sent to the Kemp Hall Bindery, 33 St Aldates', Oxford.*

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